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THROUGH DARKNESS TO DAWN

William North Rice

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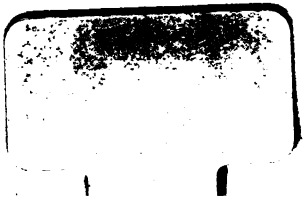

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Prof. Louis Bliss Gillet.

From Wm. Norris Rice.

THROUGH DARKNESS TO DAWN

Wm. North Rice.

THROUGH DARKNESS TO DAWN

BY

WILLIAM NORTH RICE, PH.D., LL.D.

Professor of Geology, Wesleyan University

WITH A FOREWORD BY

WOODROW WILSON

President of the United States

NEW YORK

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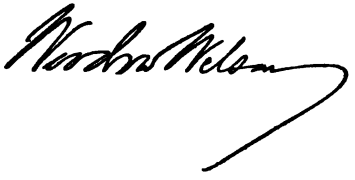
TO THE BOYS OF WESLEYAN
YOUNG AND OLD

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

3 July, 1917

I want to give myself the pleasure of prefacing this modest but very significant little book with an expression of my affectionate admiration for an old friend, Professor Rice, its author. The fine spirit of the man everyone who reads it will feel and will take refreshment and stimulation from. It speaks in authentic tones the character of the man I learned to admire in years now too long gone by when I had the privilege of being his colleague; and I have written this in order that I may have an opportunity to avow publicly a very earnestly cherished friendship.



THROUGH DARKNESS TO DAWN

NOTE

A Patriotic Rally of students and alumni of Wesleyan University was held in Memorial Chapel, on Saturday, June 16th, 1917, as a part of the exercises of Commencement Week. One of the addresses delivered on that occasion is offered to a larger audience in this little volume.

THROUGH DARKNESS TO DAWN

WAR is bad, and the greatest war is the worst war. One mangled corpse, one woman sitting in dumb despair, one child dropping its playthings to cry for the father who will never return, is a tragedy. When that tragedy is multiplied by millions, its horror is unspeakable. Tens of millions of men in arms, millions killed or wounded or languishing in prison camps, battle lines hundreds of miles in length, tens of thousands of square miles of rich farms with

smiling villages and prosperous towns converted into desert—these things make a picture of horror such as the world has never seen before. And to the agony of the present is added foreboding for the future. How will the industries of peace rally beneath the burden of billions of debt? What will become of the family, the foundation of civilization, when the potential husbands and fathers are slain?

For two years and a half we looked at these scenes of woe beyond the Atlantic with compassion, and sent some gifts to bring a little relief; but we were neutral. We rejoiced in the geographical isolation which seemed to justify us in enjoying the blessings

of peace. In the preliminary stages of the war, we were not greatly interested in the rights or wrongs of Serbia. If the Kaiser wanted to fight the Czar, we were a little regretful that both could not be beaten. When France and heroic little Belgium rose to repel the invader from their land, they had our cordial sympathy. When England sadly and sternly took up arms in defense of a violated treaty, we heartily applauded. But as neutrals we felt bound to be just to both sides. We said, what was true, that the guilt of this war belonged not alone to the men of this generation, that the war was largely due to evil traditions in European international relations which had

come down from a former age, and that for the shaping of those evil traditions no one nation alone was responsible.

But, as time passed on, it became more and more obvious that, though no nation was free from blame for the evil heritage from the past, there was yet relatively a right and a wrong side in the present war. The polychrome literature in which the various nations told their story left no doubt. The German "White Book" was black with damnation, alike in what it contained and in what was suppressed. The World War is a German war, or rather a Hohenzollern war. Its motive was military ambition. It began with the shameless

violation of a solemn treaty. It has been prosecuted from the beginning with a brutal disregard of the rights of non-combatants and neutrals, which the world has never seen since the Dark Ages. The atrocities in Belgium have not been sporadic crimes of individuals but an organized policy of crime. If anything was needed for the condemnation of Germany, it was furnished by the idiotic logic of her philosophers and scientists and the barbarous ethics of her theologians and pastors who ventured to write in her behalf. There is no escape from the conclusion that the Hohenzollern dynasty has become the enemy of the human race.

And still we remained neutral.

Rightly, I believe, our government declined to accept the rôle of a knight errant. But at last the supreme crime of the submarine warfare forced into the war the most pacific of all nations. We could not keep out of the war any longer without the absolute surrender of the rights of our citizens. And, now that we are in the war, our aims are larger than the occasion which brought us into it. We were compelled to declare war in defense of our own rights, but in entering the war we became the defenders of the rights of mankind. In our first war for liberty, we fought for the freedom of the little colonies on the Atlantic coast which were destined to become a great nation. In our second war for

liberty we fought for the freedom of an enslaved race and for the preservation of national unity. In our third and greatest war for liberty we are fighting for the freedom of mankind.

The thoughts of our allies, like our own, have widened as the war has developed. France and Belgium entered the war in self-defense; England, to maintain the neutrality of Belgium; Italy, to redeem "Italia Irredenta"; but we are all fighting now for world freedom, for the supremacy of democracy throughout the world. The new Russia, who has dethroned her czar and called back her exiles from Siberia, is striving to be worthy of the great fellowship of the cham-

pions of human freedom. Poor Russia, indeed, coming suddenly out of the dungeon gloom in which she has lain for centuries into the light of freedom, gropes and stumbles a little, dazed by the unaccustomed brightness; but soon, we trust, her eyes will become accustomed to the light, and her steps will grow firm and steady. It is well that among the counselors whom we have sent to her is our greatest master of the principles of constitutional democracy.

We must, as President Wilson has said, "make the world safe for democracy." The world will soon be safe for nothing else. The day of the kings is ending: the day of the peo-

ples is dawning. The Czar has gone: the Kaisers must go. The only monarchs that the new age can tolerate are those whose crowns are only symbols of national unity and whose decrees but register a nation's will.

How long before the dawn? That depends on the German people. The mental attitude of the German nation is a fearful illustration of the power of universal education conducted under bureaucratic control to pervert human intelligence. Yet there are not wanting symptoms that the German people may recover from the delusion in which they have been educated and may learn the truth that will make them free. The new col-

portage of the allied aviators, who are dropping from the skies President Wilson's address to Congress, may help to spread the new gospel. The lofty principles of national morality, so nobly expressed in the words of our President, may well prove a high explosive beneath the Hohenzollern throne. The English artillery, which is smashing to flinders the steel and concrete foundations of the Hindenburg line, may awaken in the mind of the German people a suspicion that their "Gott mit Uns," their tutelary Thor, is thundering on the other side. It is our hope and prayer that they may recover from their madness before they are reduced to starvation.

Our foe is not the German people.

We chant no "hymn of hate." We love the land of Luther and Kant and Goethe and Helmholtz. To us who studied in Germany and who are grateful for the privileges which we enjoyed and for the friendships which we formed, one of the saddest experiences of the war has been to see the splendid educational, commercial, and industrial life of that country crushed beneath the Juggernaut car of war. We are fighting for the freedom of Germany. In the words of that great peace-lover and peace-maker, ex-President Taft, "We are in this war to stay; we are in this war to win; we are in this war to wipe the Hohenzollern philosophy from off

the face of the whole wide earth, forever and forever."*

We are fighting for world freedom. No less are we fighting for world peace. A democratic Europe will be a peaceful Europe. A century ago the nations banished to St. Helena a war lord who, in the arrogance of his power, had defied God and man. And then they reconstructed the map of Europe. The men who made the new map believed in the divine right of kings. When the war lord of today is sent to some peaceful seclusion, the men who will reconstruct the map of Europe will be men who believe in

* "One of the prerequisite conditions of peace is the democratization of every country." Count Michael Karolyi, in the Hungarian House of Deputies, as reported in telegram from Budapest to Amsterdam, published in American papers July 14th.

the divine right of peoples. In that new reconstruction the problem will be to recognize and, so far as possible, to fulfill the aspirations of nations and races. Never again will territories be bartered between the monarchs as if their populations were only herds of cattle to be bought and sold. The arbitrary partition of territory a century ago left bitter inheritances of hate. The peace of Europe has been only an armed truce, and the armaments growing year by year have been a growing menace. Balanced alliances have kept the peace of Europe in unstable equilibrium, ready at any moment to totter into war. The end of this war will not be a "Holy Alliance" of

despots, but a league of peace among nations that respect each other's rights.

At the beginning of this war, Lieutenant-General Miles declared that it would be the greatest war in history and the last great war. Strangely prophetic, in these days of Zeppelins and aëroplanes, seem those lines of Tennyson:

"For I dipt into the future, far as human eye could see,
Saw the Vision of the world, and all the wonder that would be;

. . . . . .

Heard the heavens fill with shouting, and there rained a ghastly dew
From the nations' airy navies grappling in the central blue;

. . . . . .

Till the war-drum throbb'd no
longer, and the battle-flags were
furl'd,
In the Parliament of man, the
Federation of the world."

In the vision of the Seer of Patmos the slaughter of Armageddon ushers in the new heaven and the new earth.

What this war will cost us, how much of our material wealth will burn to ashes, how many of our homes will be shrouded in mourning, how many of the dear boys of Wesleyan who are or soon will be in France will never return, God knows. But with solemn joy we accept our share, whatever that share may be, in the great agony which will work the social and political redemption of mankind.

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